

## **HEALTH MANPOWER, TENNESSEE, 1991, 1993, 1995, and 1996**

- The traditional measure used by both the U.S. government and the State to define underservice and physician shortage areas has been the population-to-provider ratio. The concept of provider shortage (using for example, primary care physicians) has often been used synonymously with underservice. Not having enough providers in an area implies that residents in that area do not have access to the care they need.
- The population-to-provider ratio is obtained by dividing the population of a specific geographic area by the number of specified health professionals (for example, dentists) in that area. The resulting ratio reflects the number of persons per professional. A relatively large ratio reflects a greater number of persons per professional than a smaller ratio and hence, potential underservice or problems of access to health care.

### **Trends - Physicians**

- During the period from 1991 to 1995, the number of physicians in Tennessee increased from 10,251 to 11,193.
- From 1991 to 1995, the population per health professional decreased by:
  - over 6% for medical doctors, from 479 to 449 persons per medical doctor;
  - 11.9% for pediatricians, from 6,826 to 6,016 persons per pediatrician;
  - 9.9% for psychiatrists, from 10,906 to 9,823 persons per psychiatrist;
  - over 5% for obstetricians, gynecologists, and OB/GYNs, from 1,726 to 1,633 women aged 15-44 per physician; and
  - over 3% for family practitioners and

general practitioners, from 3,359 to 3,253 persons per physician.

- Since 1991, the proportion of health professionals that were medical doctors declined from 15% to 13%.
- The proportion of medical doctors that were primary care physicians and psychiatric specialists remained about the same since 1991, at 43% and 5% respectively.

### **Trends - Other Health Professionals**

- During the period from 1991 to 1995, the population per health professional decreased for all but two categories of non-physician health professionals - dentists and marital and family therapists.
- The population per dentist rose slightly from 1,806 to 1,842 (a 2% increase), while the population per marital and family therapist rose 0.9%, from 19,096 to 19,270 persons per professional.
- The largest decreases occurred for registered nurses, from 144 to 106 persons per RN (a decrease of 26%) and for certified masters social workers, from 7,941 to 5,848 persons per professional (a 26% decrease).
- The proportion of selected health professionals that were registered nurses increased from 50% to 55% during the 1991-95 period, while the proportion that were licensed practical nurses declined slightly from 27% to 25%.

### **Selected Health Professionals, 1995**

- Of 9 categories of selected health professionals in 1995, 13% were medical doctors (11,193), while 55% were